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AUTHOR Hepburn, Mary A.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes and evaluates a citizenship education project for elementary and secondary schools. The specific purpose of the project was to develop and test a model to improve political knowledge and attitudes of students by systematically infusing political/citizenship education into existing elementary and secondary social studies curriculum and by modifying factors which influence social studies including, instructional objectives, teachers, administrators, curriculum materials, and the use of community resources as learning aids. The project was based on the hypothesis that changes in learning outcomes which cannot be generated by changing textbooks and/or curriculum materials can be brought about by interrelated changes in learning methods, materials, and environment. Although the project was initiated and tested in Georgia, the developers believe that the project materials and goals are sufficiently broad to be applicable to social studies programs in other regions as well. The process involved developing a model over a three year period for generating political literacy improvement among 165 students in 11 project schools (five high schools and six elementary schools). The project was implemented in the schools over six weeks. Two instruments were developed (Citizen Knowledge Test and the Opinionnaire on Political Institutions and Participation) to test students' knowledge and attitudes at the beginning and end of the project. The programs were implemented somewhat differently at the elementary and secondary levels, but the overall objectives were the same. Test results were statistically analyzed and compared with results for 180 control students. Findings indicated that the model was sufficiently effective at the secondary level for the model to be disseminated to other school systems. It was concluded, however, that more testing was necessary for the elementary portion of the program. Tables of data, references, and lists of objectives conclude the document. (DB)

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The Improving Citizenship Education Project: Testing a Model for Change in Political Education*

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Mary A. Hepburn
University of Georgia

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At a conference with a program heavily devoted to the theoretical contexts for social-political education, I am pleased that these seminar sessions allow us to look at practical applications, i.e., what can be done in the schools. I am reporting on one such practical program for change.

The surveys of political knowledge and attitudes of young Americans conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the 1970s (NAEP, 1973; 1976) have documented deficiencies in political education in the United States. The southeastern regional results of these studies coupled with the results of a statewide assessment (The Atlanta Assessment Project, 1977) underscored the need for improving the political/citizenship education of school aged young people in Georgia and the Southeast.

To meet this need in the State of Georgia, the Improving Citizenship Education Project was initiated in the Fulton County School System in 1977 by the Georgia Department of Education supported by federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The purpose of the Improving Citizenship Education Project is to develop and test a model to improve the political knowledge and attitudes of students by systematically infusing political/citizenship education into the existing elementary and secondary social studies curriculum and by modifying multiple components of social studies instruction in the school system.

The thesis behind the project is that changes in learning outcomes cannot be generated just by changing the textbooks or other curriculum materials. Neither can the change be accomplished solely by teacher education or solely by administrative commitment (See Sarason, 1971; Goodlad, 1979). The Project utilizes, instead, a multiple component model for producing interrelated change in the learning methods, materials and environment. It is designed for system-level change.

The Process

The Project developed a five-component model for generating improvement in the political evaluation of elementary and secondary school students. Coordinated change efforts were then conducted across these five components. The five school factors considered influential in political education are: 1) stated instructional objectives, 2) teachers, 3) administrators, 4) curriculum materials, and 5) community resources as learning aids. (For a more detailed discussion of the model see Hepburn, 1979).

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The improvement process was slated for three years. The first year was utilized for planning and design. Elementary and secondary teachers working with the Project staff determined that if political illiteracy was to be countered, "citizenship education" must be built into the social studies curriculum throughout the elementary and secondary grades. Broad goals and content areas for the program were defined with the aim of promoting political awareness and effective political interaction. The project staff made plans for working with teachers and administrators in the schools, selecting and/or developing materials, involving community leaders, and implementing and evaluating the program. Knowledge and attitude tests were developed.

Fifteen project schools were selected. These were later trimmed down to eleven schools - six elementary and five secondary. Elementary (1-7) and secondary (8-12) teacher teams were organized which met and exchanged ideas as a single group sometimes and worked as separate groups at other times. (Because of organizational and scheduling differences in the elementary and secondary schools, the program has to be implemented somewhat differently at the two levels, but overall objectives are the same.)

In the second year the plans for each component were carried out. 1) Consistent and specific instructional objectives for the overall outcome of political/citizenship education in the total social studies curriculum were stated and disseminated among project teachers. 2) A six-month teacher education ("staff development") program combined instruction in government and politics and instruction in how to teach political knowledge and skills. 3) Meetings with administrators of the project schools were conducted to make them aware of the project and its objectives and to promote their support for the field activities, mock trials, and various other teaching activities associated with the project. 4) Suggested lesson plans for the various grade levels were outlined by project teachers and further developed by the staff. Ultimately two teachers' handbooks were produced--Improving Citizenship Education Elementary Handbook and Improving Citizenship Education Secondary Handbook. In addition, appropriate existing materials including textbooks, filmstrips and other available teaching materials were identified and, in many cases, demonstrated for or by the teachers. 5) A variety of community resources including people and places in the metro area which could add reality and depth to instruction on political knowledge and participatory skills were identified and cross-listed by topic and grade level in a guidebook which makes community resources much more accessible.

In the third year the educational program was implemented in the project schools for six weeks, and student effects were tested and the project model evaluated. The secondary portion was "validated." That is, the research results and practical educational changes were reviewed by an out-of-state educational evaluation team, and it was determined that the model was sufficiently effective at the secondary level (grades 8-12) for the model to be disseminated to other school systems.

It was decided that six weeks had not been sufficient time to test the elementary portion of the program because the average daily time allotment to citizenship-social studies was considerably less than in the secondary grades, especially in the primary grades. Also, the ultimate implementation planned for the elementary grades is ten weeks. Consequently, this fall, in the fourth year of the project, the elementary portion of the program is to be fully implemented, tested, and evaluated in the five project elementary schools.

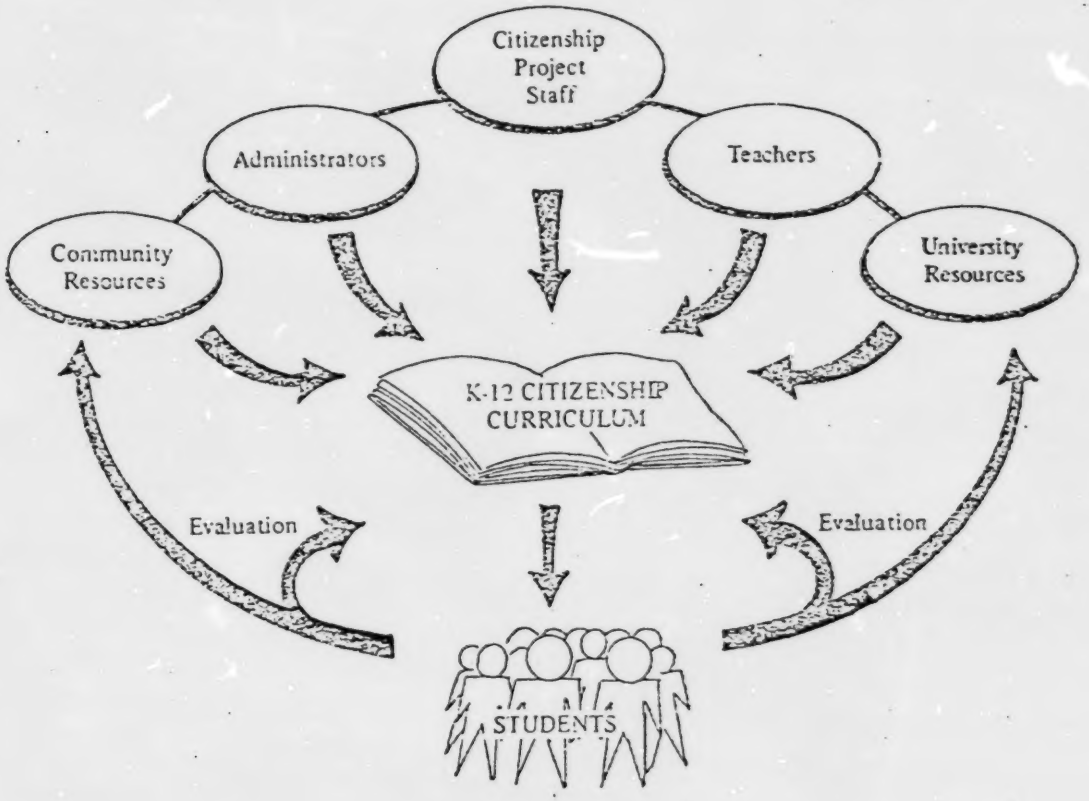

Figure 1.–Improving Citizenship Education: Curriculum Change Process

The Students

The Fulton County School System serves all of Georgia's most populous county except for the city of Atlanta which has a separate school system. The district covers a sprawling 420-square-mile area which curls around the western side of Atlanta engulfing urban, suburban, and small town areas. The population of the school district is about 206,000, and there are 35,733 students in the school system's 19 high schools and 58 elementary schools. The students are 71% white and 29% black, and they come from a broad variety of socio-economic backgrounds. They range from highly affluent families in some suburbs to families living in low-income housing in several cities of the more populated part of the county.

Occupations reflect proximity to the state capital and the nation's second largest airport: 37% services (half of which are communications, transportation, utilities, and sanitary services), 17% retail trade, 15% manufacturing, 12% wholesale trade, 11% government workers and about 6% in insurance, finance and real estate (according to data from the Atlanta Regional Commission, 1978).

Five high schools and six elementary schools which were representative of the range of socio-economic and community characteristics in the district were selected as the test schools for the project. For purposes of research and evaluation each project school was matched with a control school with similar characteristics. The change process involving teachers, administrators, curriculum guidelines and, finally, students were conducted only in the project schools. Instructional programs in the control schools continued as usual.

The Test of The Secondary School Program

In the winter quarter of the 1979-80 school year the program was implemented and tested in the secondary grades (8-12). The evaluation design was a quasi-experimental design using highly similar but non-equivalent control groups. (Although the control and experimental groups were matched by socio-economic characteristics, students were not randomly assigned to groups, but intact class groups in matched project and control schools were used.) The five high schools which had been selected as project schools were chosen on the basis of their representation of the total school system population considering community settings, racial makeup, occupational types, and types of housing. Each project school was matched with a similar high school from which control classes were drawn. Students were given knowledge and attitude tests before the six week experiment and after it.

Sample

A total of ten social studies teachers in project schools conducted the experiment. These ten teachers had participated in the teacher education program and were aware of all of the improvement processes. Each of the ten teachers had one of their social studies classes randomly selected as the treatment class by a project staff member. Control classes from the matched control schools were randomly selected from among social studies classes at the same grade level. There were 165 project students and 180 control students. The total (N=345) included

only students who were present for both the pretests and the posttests. Students from all grade levels participated in the experiment, although the greater portion were from grade 8 and grade 9.

Instruments

Two testing instruments were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the secondary school political/citizenship education program:

1) Citizen Knowledge Test (Form B) was used to determine what change, if any was made in the political knowledge of students. This test was developed in 1977 and validated in studies conducted in 1978 and reported in the Journal of Social Studies Research in 1979 (Hepburn and Strickland, 1979). The test was based on the general objectives for political-citizenship education outlined by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1976) and it was referenced to objectives of the Project. The test contains eight subtests related to content areas which were built around these objectives. The test was reviewed for content validity by political science and political education professionals. Comparisons of 8th and 12th grade scores in validation studies confirmed expected differences and supported its construct validity. In addition, its criterion-related validity was supported by correlation of grade point averages in civic and history courses taken by twelfth graders. An internal consistency reliability of .90 (Cronbach alpha) was found on both the pretest and posttest of this experiment.

2) The Opinionnaire on Political Institutions and Participation (Secondary Grades Form) was developed in 1978 and validated in a series of studies conducted in 1978 and 1979 and reported in an article to appear in Educational and Psychological Measurements (Hepburn and Napier, 1980). The instrument contains 48 items expressing attitudes towards political institutions, public political participation, and school political participation. It is constructed to check for an I/other dichotomy by examining differences between general attitudes and personal attitudes in expressed views towards political institutions and participation. Items were referenced to objectives of the Project as a check on content validity, and validation studies supported the construct validity of the instrument. The items have five responses (strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree). In this evaluation however, the tests were scored using a three-point scale because data was collected with a plan for comparison with the elementary form of the instrument which uses a 3-point scale. Hence, scores could range from 48 to 144. Internal consistency reliability coefficients were .77 on the pretest and .80 on the posttest (Cronbach alpha).

It was hypothesized that students in the classes taught by project teachers would show a significant positive difference ($p < .05$) in political/citizenship knowledge and in political attitudes when compared to the matched control students in classes from non-project schools.

The Treatment

During the six weeks treatment period, project teachers infused political education into their social studies courses following their own lesson plans which were based on the teaching procedures of the staff

development sessions, the project objectives, materials, lessons, activities, and community resources extracting those strategies which fit readily into their specific courses. The high school courses included Georgia history, geography, economics, American history, political science, and law education. (The treatment was necessarily limited to six weeks of the ten-week winter quarter in the high schools by the requirement of the State Department of Education that all data be collected, analyzed, and reported by the end of the academic year.)

The teacher education process and treatment were documented by questionnaires and tests designed to detail activity within the several components of the model (e.g. pre and posttests of teachers in the staff development program, teacher questionnaires on administrative support, questionnaires on community resources used, checklists of materials used.) Also, a daily log of content and teaching activities was kept by both project teachers and control teachers throughout the six weeks.

Results

Analysis of covariance was used to analyze the results of both the knowledge and attitude tests in order to adjust for initial differences in the project and control groups as determined by the pretests. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for the knowledge tests and shows that the adjusted posttests for the project students were significantly different at the .001 level. The statistics for the political attitude test results are shown on Table 2 which indicates the adjusted project student posttest scores were significantly different at the .01 level.

Additional statistical tests on these results were conducted to estimate their practical educational significance. The difference between adjusted mean posttest scores for the two groups were compared to determine if the project group mean was at least equivalent to 1/3 of the standard deviation obtained on all scores for that test (i.e., medium effect, Cohen, 1969; Tallmadge, 1977). These tests suggested that the change in citizenship/political knowledge demonstrated by the project group was of significant practical difference and could be reproduced with another sample. The attitude change in the project group, however, appears to be a small effect which would be less likely to be produced in a similar six-week test of the improvement model. The attitude result is not surprising when one considers that past research has shown that attitudes are much more stable than knowledge and more difficult to change (See for example, Shaw and Wright, 1967). The attitude results did indicate a trend toward positive change. Hence, it was recommended that the project treatment in the classroom be continued through the full ten weeks of the quarter rather than six weeks as tested.

Table 1

Summary of Descriptive Statistics
Citizenship Knowledge Test

Test	Statistic	Project Subjects N=165	Control Subjects N=180
Knowledge Pretest	Mean	31.9	29.7
	S.D.	12.5	10.3
Knowledge Posttest	Mean	36.8*	30.3
	S.D.	12.5	10.9
Adjusted Knowledge Posttest	Mean	35.6*	31.1

*$p < .001$

Table 2

Summary of Descriptive Statistics
Opinionnaire on Political Institutions and Participation

Test	Statistic	Project Subjects N=165	Control Subjects N=180
Attitude Pretest	Mean	122.0	119.3
	S.d.	9.3	9.9
Attitude Posttest	Mean	122.9*	119.0
	S.d.	9.7	10.2
Adjusted Attitude Posttest	Mean	121.8**	120.0
	S.d.		

*$p < .001$
**$p < .01$

Subtest results on the political knowledge posttest show the project students scoring significantly higher on all subtests (Table 3). Grade by grade mean scores for project posttests showed a progression (33.2 for 8th grade, 37.8 for 9th grade, 46.8 for 10-12th grades).

In reviewing the attitude test results it should be noted that both project and control students began the treatment with fairly high attitude scores (project mean = 122.0; control group mean = 119.3 out of a possible 144). Also, it should be noted that although specific attitude objectives were defined by the project, the project materials and teaching approaches, with the exception of occasional values-analysis and ethical reflection activities, depended heavily on the effects of increased political knowledge and skills to influence attitudes in the secondary grades. (This is one of the differences in the elementary program to be tested this fall where Kohlbergian-type moral education activities will be used in the middle grades). The control group mean dropped slightly on the secondary posttest while the project group mean increased by .9(Table 4). The two subtests which showed significant differences in posttest comparisons between project and control were those which probe attitudes towards participation in the public arena. Student attitudes toward participation by themselves and others did improve. The results suggest some positive influence from increases in political knowledge, but, obviously, more study of attitudinal effects is needed, especially study of a longer term treatment.

Summary

The Improving Citizenship Education Project has demonstrated the effectiveness of using a multi-component approach to improving student political education. The knowledge and skills results for the secondary grades are solid and convincing. The attitude results although rather weak suggest a trend that deserves further testing over a longer period of time. The Improving Citizenship Education Project secondary program (grades 8-12) has been validated for adoption by other school systems which will in turn obtain test results of its effectivness with students in other systems. Perhaps, the main accomplishment of the project will be its contribution to expanding the dialogue on political education beyond the descriptive discussion of what is and beyond the theoretical discussion of what ought to be to considerations of what improvement efforts have been actually tried and tested in the schools. In addition, for too long, we have assumed the feasibility of a single variable approach to change (e.g. the assumption that the dissemination of improved textbooks or more clearly stated objectives could generate change). Most social studies teachers are aware that the change process is more complex than that. It is time that the professional developers and researchers in political education attend to the several components of schooling which influence the learning environment and learning outcomes. If we are to improve the impact of schooling on political and social education, we must increase our awareness of the interrelated parts of the educational system and probe the ways in which they contribute to student learning.

Table 3

Project Students
Political Knowledge Posttest Scores
By Subtest

	# of Items	Project Group (N=165) Mean	Control Group (N=180) Mean
Overall	73	36.8*	30.3
National Government	11	5.0*	4.1
State & Local Government	10	5.6*	4.3
Politics	11	3.6*	4.7
Democratic Principles	7	3.8*	3.1
Law & Individual Rights	10	4.6*	3.9
Global Politics	5	2.4*	2.2
Participation Skills	10	5.7*	4.7
Analytic Skills	9	4.2*	3.5

Table 4

Project Students
Political Attitude Posttest Scores By Subtest

	Maximum Score	Project Group (N=165) Mean	Control Group (N=180) Mean
Overall	144	122.9*	119.0
Political Institutions-Others	24	20.5	20.0
Political Institutions-Self	24	19.4	19.1
Public Political Participation-Others	24	20.4**	19.7
Public Political Participation-Self	24	20.6**	19.6
School Political Participation-Others	24	21.7	21.0
School Political Participation-Self	24	20.3	19.7

*$p < .01$
**$p < .05$

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Improving Citizenship Education Project

Nine Broad Goals Which Guided The Development

of Objectives and Content

1. Understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities of U.S. Citizenship.
2. Understanding of the structure and operations of local, state, and national government.
3. Understanding of the roles of individuals in the political decision-making processes.
4. Understanding of the principles of individual rights and learning to make choices in the context of concern for the society as a whole.
5. Understanding of the U.S. legal system and a commitment to rule of law.
6. Knowledge of current public issues and skills for evaluating alternative choices in regard to these issues.
7. Understanding of the interdependence of the global community and the political processes in operation internationally.
8. Understanding of the means to participate in school, local, state, and national political processes, and possessing the skills to do so.
9. Understanding of the need for government and community services and the ways to secure, utilize, and contribute to these services.

Improving Citizenship Education Project

Objectives Stated As Testing Behaviors

Knowledge Objectives

Students will:

Know and apply specific facts, basic concepts, and processes related to government and politics

1. Identify specific facts, processes, and basic concepts of national government.
2. Identify specific facts, processes, and basic concepts of state and local government.
3. Identify specific facts, processes, and basic concepts of principles of democracy.
4. Identify specific facts, processes, and basic concepts of politics.
5. Identify specific facts, processes, and basic concepts of law and individual rights.
6. Identify specific facts, processes, and basic concepts of global affairs.
7. Apply participation skills related to the government and politics.
8. Utilize analytic skills with government and political data and issues.

Attitude Objectives

Students will:

Demonstrate commitment to democratic institutions, principles, and processes by the following means:

1. Express commitment to democratic institutions.

   Identify magnitude of agreement with statements about political institutions as others should view them.
   Identify magnitude of agreement with statements about political institutions as self views them.

2. Express commitment to community democratic processes.

   Identify magnitude of agreement with statements about community democratic participation as others should view them.
   Identify magnitude of agreement with statements about community democratic participation as self views them.

3. Express commitment to school democratic processes.

   Identify magnitude of agreement with statements about school democratic participation as others should view them.
   Identify magnitude of agreement with statements about school democratic participation as self views them.